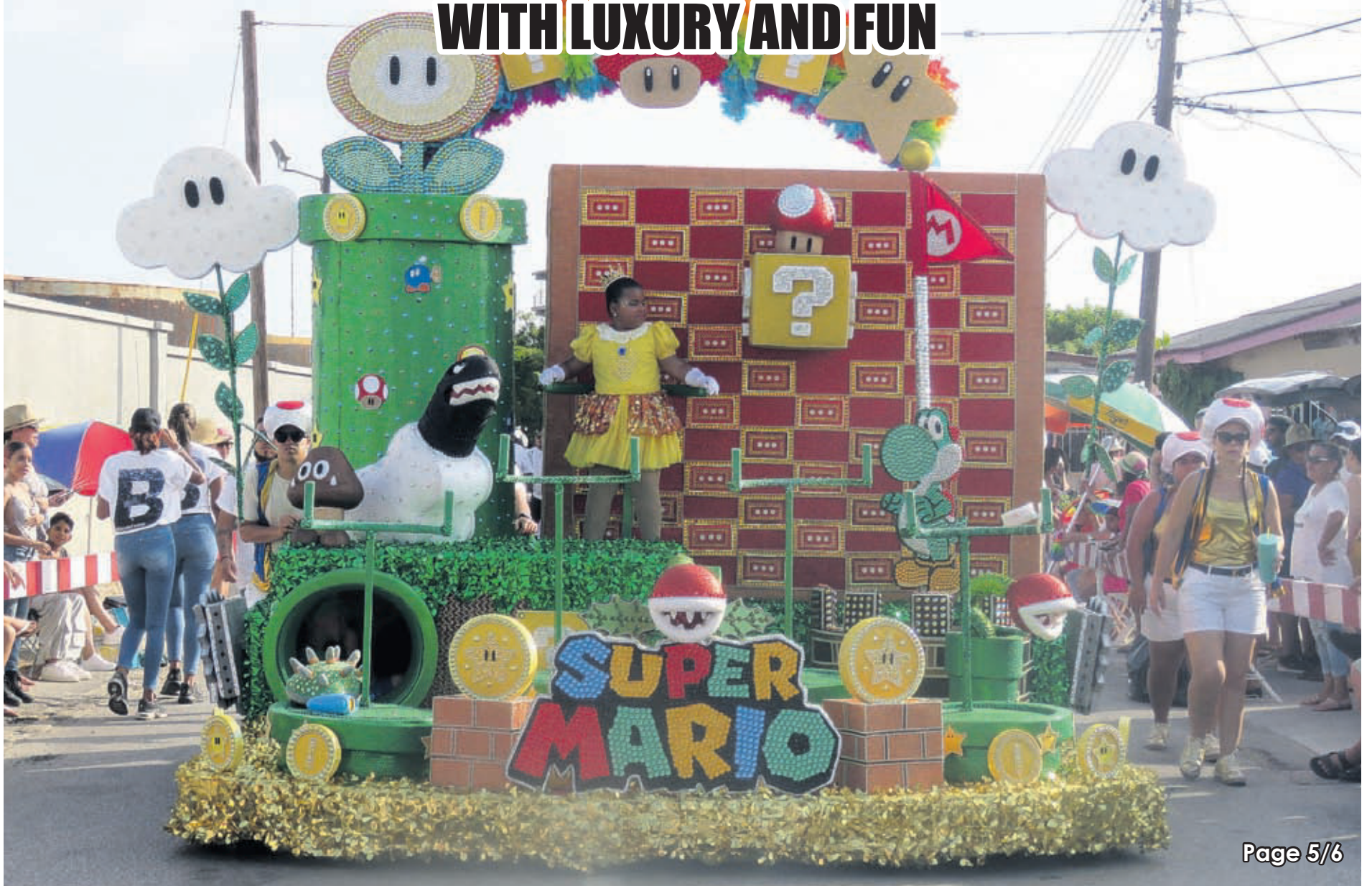


CHILDREN'S PARADE IN SAN NICOLAS FILLED WITH LUXURY AND FUN



Page 5/6

CARNAVAL ENTERTAINMENT ON TUESDAYS



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8PM
Carnaval Show



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Biden's vow of affordable internet for all is threatened by the looming expiration of subsidies

By **KAVISH HARJAI**
Associated Press

President Joe Biden recently traveled to North Carolina to promote his goal of affordable internet access for all Americans, but the promise for 23 million families across the U.S. is on shaky ground.

That's because a subsidy that helps people with limited resources afford internet access is set to expire this spring.

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP), which provides \$30 a month for qualifying families in most places and \$75 on tribal lands, will run out of money by the end of April if Congress doesn't extend it further. "I think this should be high priority for Congress," North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper, a Democrat who has worked with a bipartisan group of governors to promote the program, said in a phone interview. "To many families, \$30 a month is a big deal."

It matters a lot to Shirleen Alexander of Charlotte, who said the money she saves through the ACP goes toward her grocery bills. It also offsets some of the stress she feels over medical bills.

"If they took (ACP) away, it would be like taking food out of my mouth," said Alexander, a senior citizen on a fixed income. "I need the service, and some of my senior citizen friends need it, as well."

The program is key to the



President Joe Biden speaks outside Cook Out, a burger joint in Raleigh, N.C., Jan. 18, 2024, as Gov. Roy Cooper, D-N.C., right, looks on.

Associated Press

Biden administration's plans to make the internet available to everyone, which the president has touted repeatedly as he has ramped up his reelection campaign. He has likened it to the Rural Electrification Administration, the New Deal program that delivered electricity to much of rural America in the 1930s. "Our goal is to connect everyone in America to affordable, reliable high-speed Internet by the year 2030, everyone in America, just like Franklin Roosevelt did a generation ago with electricity," President Biden said in Raleigh last month. So far, only 43% of eligible households nationwide have signed up for the ACP

subsidy. But the program has enabled people who have signed up to avoid the kinds of financial trade-offs Alexander described, said Brian Vo, chief investment officer of Connect Humanity, a nonprofit promoting widespread internet access. It also gives them access to vital services such as telehealth, remote schooling and work, he said.

"If you put ACP and affordability in the context of the social determinants it drives and the economic value created, the benefits far outweigh the cost of \$30 per household," Vo said.

If the program expires, participating families, including nearly 900,000 in North Carolina, will either lose internet access or have to pay more to stay connected.

North Carolina is among the top states in the country when it comes to taking advantage of the ACP, according to an AP analysis of the program. More than 50% of eligible households in the state are enrolled in the program.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers recently proposed a bill to sustain the ACP through the end of 2024 with an additional \$7 billion in funding — one billion more than what Biden

asked Congress to appropriate for the program at the end of last year. However, no votes have been scheduled to move the bill forward and it's unclear if the program will be prioritized in a divided Congress. In the meantime, the Federal Communications Commission has already taken steps to wind the program down. It has instructed internet providers to send notices about the projected end of the program and announced that it will stop accepting new enrollees after February 7.

Nate Denny, the deputy director for broadband for North Carolina, said he's "extremely worried" about the winding down of the subsidy program, especially as the state is set to receive a total of \$1.5 billion from the federal government. Most of that money will be awarded to internet providers to build internet infrastructure in areas that need it most.

"The ACP has a tremendous effect on adoption, but it also has a huge impact on the state's ability to stretch available infrastructure funding," Denny said.

The ACP reduces the amount of grant money an internet provider needs to build into lower-income communities because it

provides the assurance of a steady customer base, according to state broadband leaders the AP spoke with and an analysis from nonprofit Common Sense Media and consulting firm Boston Consulting Group.

"With the ACP's help, internet providers are seeing more willing subscribers, more beneficiaries of their investments that then help them stretch their capital further, and thusly stretch state investments, as well," Denny said. The infrastructure money comes from a pot of \$42.5 billion allocated for the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment (BEAD) program, the cornerstone of the Biden administration's efforts to close the digital divide for good.

In December, states submitted draft plans detailing lower-cost plans that providers who build networks using BEAD money will be required to offer qualifying families. Several states incorporated the ACP subsidies into those draft plans in ways that would lower the cost for internet access to zero for some customers.

Though those lower-cost plans wouldn't work as designed without support from the federal subsidy program, a spokesperson for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration said BEAD "will still connect everyone in America and ensure that newly connected households have access to affordable plans."

Several Biden administration officials, including Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, have highlighted the need for more funding for the program during trips across the country in recent months.

The state of North Carolina will do what it can to maintain affordable internet no matter what, the governor said, but he hopes Congress will keep the subsidies coming to those who need them.

"We want to try to keep this program alive, and I still think the chance to do that is still there," Cooper said. □



President Joe Biden speaks in Raleigh, N.C., Jan. 18, 2024.

Associated Press

U.S. to roll out visa restrictions on people who misuse spyware to target journalists, activists

By AAMER MADHANI

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Biden administration announced Monday it is rolling out a new policy that will allow it to impose visa restrictions on foreign individuals involved in the misuse of commercial spyware. The administration's policy will apply to people who've been involved in the misuse of commercial spyware to target individuals including journalists, activists, perceived dissidents, members of marginalized communities, or the family members of those who are targeted. The visa restrictions could also apply to people who facilitate or get financial benefit from the misuse of commercial spyware, officials said.

"The United States remains concerned with the growing misuse of commercial spyware around the world to facilitate repression, restrict the free flow of information, and enable human rights abuses," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement announcing the new policy. "The misuse of commercial spyware threatens privacy and freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. Such targeting



Secretary of State Antony Blinken speaks during a news conference with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the State Department, Monday, Jan. 29, 2024, in Washington.

Associated Press

has been linked to arbitrary detentions, forced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings in the most egregious of cases." Biden issued a executive order nearly a year ago restricting the U.S. government's use of commercial spyware "that poses risks to national security." That order required the head of any U.S. agency using commercial programs to certify that they don't pose a significant counterintelligence or other security risk,

a senior administration official said. It was issued as the White House acknowledged a surge in hacks of U.S. government employees, across 10 countries, that had been compromised or targeted by commercial spyware. A senior administration official who briefed reporters ahead of Monday's announcement would not say if any particular individuals were in line to immediately be impacted by the visa restrictions. The official spoke

on the condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House. Officials said the visa restriction policy can apply to citizens of any country found to have misused or facilitated the malign use of spyware, even if they are from countries whose citizens are allowed entry into the U.S. without first applying for a visa. Perhaps the best known example of spyware, the Pegasus software from Is-

rael's NSO Group, was used to target more than 1,000 people across 50 countries, according to security researchers and a July 2021 global media investigation, citing a list of more than 50,000 cellphone numbers. The U.S. has already placed export limits on NSO Group, restricting the company's access to U.S. components and technology.

Pegasus spyware was used in Jordan to hack the cellphones of at least 30 people, including journalists, lawyers, human rights and political activists, the digital rights group Access Now announced last week.

The hacking with spyware made by Israel's NSO Group occurred from 2019 until last September, according to Access Now. It did not accuse Jordan's government of the hacking.

Amnesty International also reported that its forensic researchers had determined that Pegasus spyware was installed on the phone of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi's fiancée, Hatice Cengiz, just four days after he was killed in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in 2018. The company had previously been implicated in other spying on Khashoggi. □

Tribal sovereignty among the top issues facing Oklahoma governor and Legislature

By SEAN MURPHY

Associated Press Writer

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — Tribal sovereignty is expected to again be a top issue facing Oklahoma lawmakers and Gov. Kevin Stitt as they returned on Monday to begin the 2024 legislative session. Stitt, a Republican and himself a citizen of the Cherokee Nation, has had a contentious relationship with tribal leaders that began with a dispute during his first year in office over casino revenue and has worsened with conflict over agreements on tobacco sales, motor vehicle tags, taxes and criminal jurisdiction.

In his State of the State address to lawmakers on Monday, Stitt once again took aim at expanded tribal sovereignty and the landmark 2020 U.S. Supreme Court decision on criminal jurisdiction, dubbed *McGirt* after the plaintiff in the case, that much of eastern Oklahoma remained a tribal reservation.

"Three years after *McGirt*, we are still operating under a confusing and conflicting patchwork of jurisdiction across our state," Stitt said. Stitt also said confusion remains in Oklahoma over whether tribal citizens on reservations must pay income

taxes or can be cited by police for traffic violations. "We can't be a state that operates with two different sets of rules," Stitt said. "Especially based on race." Cherokee Nation Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin, a frequent critic of Stitt and one of many tribal leaders in the gallery for the governor's speech, bristled at Stitt's suggestion that race is a factor in tribal relations.

"That's either a very cynical, purposeful, strategic employment of rhetoric, or it's born of complete ignorance, because we're not talking about race," Hoskin said. "We're talking about



Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt answers a question while taking part in a panel discussion during a Republican Governors Association conference, Nov. 16, 2022, in Orlando, Fla.

Associated Press

sovereign nations. And if he doesn't get it at this point, I'm starting to doubt that he will." Hoskin also downplayed Stitt's contention that there is

widespread confusion over criminal jurisdiction. "The picture he's painted of confusion, we don't see it," Hoskin said. "We see cooperation every day." □

For the first time, Myanmar forces flee into Bangladesh during fighting with an ethnic armed group

By JULHAS ALAM

Associated Press

DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) —

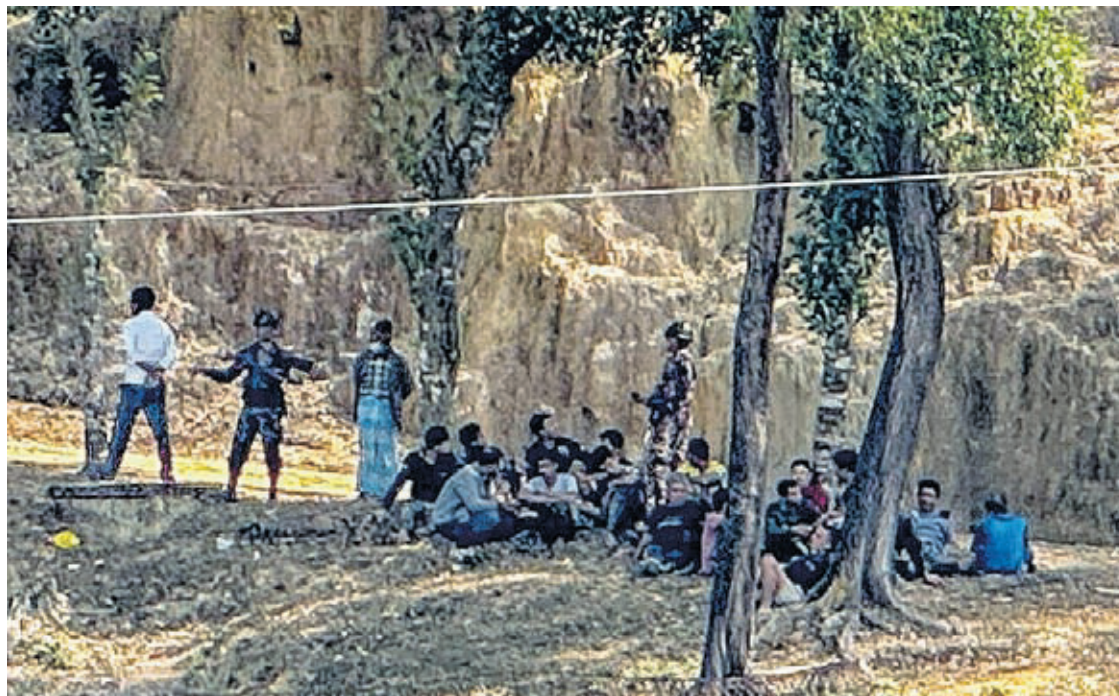
More than 100 members of Myanmar's Border Guard Police have fled their posts and taken shelter in Bangladesh to escape fighting between Myanmar security forces and an ethnic minority army, an official with Bangladesh's border agency said Monday.

It is the first time that Myanmar forces have been known to flee into Bangladesh since an alliance of ethnic minority armies in Myanmar launched an offensive against the military government late last year.

Shariful Islam, spokesperson for Border Guard Bangladesh, said the Myanmar forces entered over the past two days during fighting with the Arakan Army in Myanmar's Rakhine state bordering Bangladesh.

The 103 troops entered through the Tombru border in Bandarban district, he said. "They have been disarmed and taken to safe places," he said.

Myanmar's military government had no immediate



Members of Myanmar Border Guard Police, in civilian clothing, sit under the shade of trees after abandoning their posts following an alleged attack by members of the Arakan Army as Bangladesh border guards stand guard in Ghumdhum, Bandarban, Bangladesh, on Monday, Feb. 5, 2024.

comment.

Also on Monday, Bangladeshi media said two persons a Bangladeshi woman and a Rohingya refugee were killed in shelling from Myanmar after a house in Bandarban was hit.

Bangladesh's law minister, Anisul Huq, told Parliament that Prime Minister Sheikh

Hasina had instructed the military and paramilitary border guards to have patience in dealing with the tensions across the border. "Bangladesh is observing the situation closely and steps will be taken," the United News of Bangladesh agency quoted him as saying.

Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said Monday that Myanmar's ambassador to Bangladesh, U. Aung Kyaw Moe, and Deputy Foreign Minister, U. Lwin Oo, told Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs that they would take back their troops sheltered in Bangladesh.

Associated Press

The ministry also sent a "note verbale" to the Myanmar envoy in Dhaka, protesting bullets and mortar shells from Myanmar landing in Bangladesh.

The Arakan Army is the military wing of the Rakhine ethnic minority that seeks autonomy from Myanmar's central government. It has been attacking army outposts in the western state since November.

It is part of an alliance of ethnic minority armies that launched an offensive in October and gained strategic territory in Myanmar's northeast bordering China. Its success was seen as a major defeat for the military government, which seized power in February 2021 from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi and is now embroiled in a wide-ranging civil war.

The alliance, called the Three Brotherhood Alliance, said in a statement Monday that the Arakan Army had attacked two border outposts in Maungdaw township in Rakhine state and captured one of them on Sunday. □

Rio de Janeiro has declared a dengue health emergency days before Carnival is due to start

By ELÉONORE HUGHES

Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Rio de Janeiro has declared a public health emergency because of an outbreak of mosquito-borne dengue fever, the city said in its official gazette on Monday, just days before Carnival celebrations kick off across Brazil.

But the outbreak wasn't expected to disrupt Carnival, which officially starts on Friday evening and runs until Feb. 14.

Rio city hall announced the opening of 10 care centers, the creation of an emergency operations center and the allocation of hospital beds for dengue pa-

tients. Authorities will also use "smoke cars" in regions with the highest incidence

of cases, diffusing an insecticide in the air.

Since the beginning of



Dengue patients receive treatment in a provisional clinic in the Santa Maria neighborhood of Brasilia, Brazil, Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024.

Associated Press

2024, the municipality has registered more than 10,000 dengue cases. That is just under half of the total cases 23,000 recorded throughout all of 2023.

The announcement comes as tourists and revelers are pouring into Rio to take part in street parties and attend the samba schools' flamboyant parades.

Dengue is a viral infection transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes and is more common in tropical climates. Frequent rains and high temperatures, which accelerate the hatching of mosquito eggs and the development of larvae, make the famously hot city of Rio

susceptible to dengue outbreaks.

But the problem is national. The explosion of dengue cases across Brazil has caused at least four states Acre, Minas Gerais and Goias, in addition to the Federal District to declare public health emergencies. On Monday, the Brazilian air force set up a 60-bed field hospital in the Federal District in Ceilandia that was due to begin treating patients. "Our objective is to relieve emergency care units in the region, given that today the Federal District accounts for around 20% of dengue cases in the country," air force commander Lt. Brig. □

Children's Parade in San Nicolas filled with luxury and fun



- **ORANJESTAD** – Last Sunday on the streets of San
- **Nicolas**, children jumped to the beat of carnival mu-
- **sic** and enjoyed the last Children's Parade of Carni-
- **val 70**. Carnival mood, luxury and creativity were on
- **display** and the people of Aruba enjoyed a wonder-
- **ful Children's Parade**.

- A total of six groups took part in the parade. Centro di Bario Noord opened the parade together with
- Aruba's Children Carnival Queen, Xeená Dijkhof.
- There were also a few schools who joined Centro di
- Bario Noord to celebrate Carnival.

- The second group was Champagne Kids Carnival Group with the theme of Universal Studios. Fantasy and luxury stood out with the children dressed as different characters from Universal movies.

- The third group was Don Flip Carnival Group, with the theme of Amazonia. Paying homage to nature, the children presented costumes full of color and fantasy.

- TOB Kids Group was fourth, showing off their theme from the movie Coco. Sparkling costumes with luxurious road pieces stood out and represented various aspects of the movie in a beautiful way.

- Fifth group was Little Groovers Carnival Group, which this year had as a theme the children's movie Inside Out. The group displayed beautiful costumes expressing different motifs in the movie and the carnival spirit was in full-swing.

- Empire Kids closed off the parade with their theme
- Sapate. A group that for the first time participated
- in the Children's Parade and really stood out on the
- road. Luxurious and creative road pieces stood out
- and the happy children were dressed as different
- kinds of shoes.

- As is traditional, after the Children's Parade in San
- Nicolas the burning of the Momito took place in order
- to bid farewell to the children's parades in Carnival.
- Aruba as a whole enjoyed a gorgeous parade full of
- happiness, fantasy and creativity. □

More pictures of of the Children's Parade on Page 6...

Children's Parade in San Nicolas filled with luxury and fun



The district of Savaneta

A quick history guide to the island's first capital

(Oranjestad)—Before Oranjestad became the island nation's capital, Aruba's first capital was the district of Savaneta. Here is where the cultural identity of Aruba was born, and from where the rest of the island developed into what it is today.

Savaneta is said to have been the first place where the Caquetio inhabitants first stepped foot on the island. Though there isn't hard evidence to back this up, but considering the legend of the Cacique Arua, it is believed that there were already movements on Aruba—and Savaneta—around 88 AD.

The Caquetios probably made their way to the island either from Venezuela, Colombia or other Caribbean islands in the region, but with good weather it was relatively easy for them to travel back and forth in their canoes. So, since the Caquetios discovered the island, Aruba found her first form of civilization.

It wasn't until 1499 when Aruba met another group of people who set foot on the island: the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda. De Ojeda first took notice of Aruba off the coast of Venezuela, during his exploration of the Latin American country. This was on August 9th, 1499. However, de Ojeda didn't actually sail to the island till 4 days later, on August 23rd, 1499. This was the beginning of the Spanish era on Aruba (1499-1636).

Alonso usually didn't stop at every island or land he saw, especially not in the Caribbean. He would often take notice of land from afar and continue sailing. However,

Aruba was an exception. He had heard that there were "quebracho" trees on the island, which were commonly used to produce dye or paint. But since these trees could not be found in Savaneta, he continued to search in the area of what is now known as Santa Cruz. The best way to transport the tree barks was via a route passing through Savaneta, and so the first road between Savaneta and Santa Cruz was made.

The Dutch colonial era (1636-1805)

During the 80-year war between The Netherlands and Spain, Dutch explorers and merchants began to travel to the ABC islands. Once they landed in Aruba, they deported the small Arawakan and Spanish community that was living on the island. This was the beginning of colonization of the ABC islands by the Dutch empire. Around the same, the West Indian Company (WIC) was born. Bonaire and Curaçao were mostly used for plantations, where the Dutch had transported slaves from Africa. Aruba, on the other hand, was mostly used to raise cattle and to house the haring factory. The Dutch had often forced the indigenous community to work for them.

In 1636, when the Netherlands won the war against Spain, the country surrendered the islands to the Dutch.

The Dutch administration appointed the island's first commander, an Irish man named N. Williams. Because the Dutch were interested in other Caribbean islands and countries in South America, they imported Dutch merchants and business



Commandeursbaai (Commander's Bay) at Savaneta

men, all of whom resided in Savaneta. This way, Savaneta officially became the island's first capital.

However, at the end of the 18th century, the commander at the time, J.R. Lauffer, moved his office to what is now "Horse Bay" in Oranjestad. Because the highest office on the island moved away from Savaneta, the capital lost its title to what was called then Playa.

How Savaneta got its name

The name Savaneta probably has a Spanish origin. It was said that when the Spanish climbed a hill called Yara, they saw that the area was mostly open and had no big trees. In Spanish, such a land area is called a "sabana".

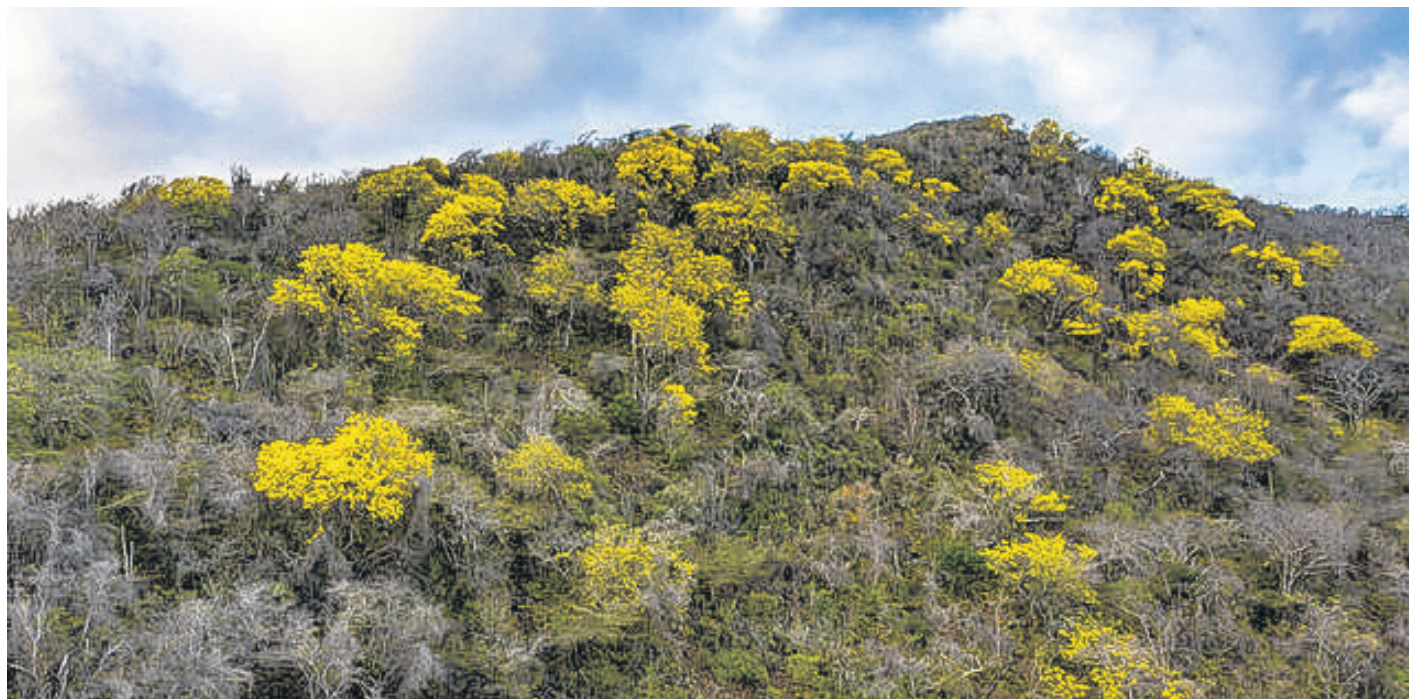
Because of its land surface, Sava-

neta was a great place to construct cattle farms. From here, the farmer culture on Aruba was born. Before the Aruban Gold Rush and the construction of the Refinery in San Nicolas, most residents were farmers, and Savaneta had many inhabitants that farmed fruits and vegetables. They also continued the tradition of raising cattle, like goat, sheep, pigs and horses. Savaneta was one of the first places on the island to have a general farming culture. From this culture, many other traditions were born, like the Dera Gay Holiday that we celebrate every year on June 24th. □

Source: Historia di Savaneta (History of Savaneta) by Adolf "Duffi" Kock.



Alonso de Ojeda



"Quebracho" (Kibrahacha) tree; used to make dye and paint



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Who is “King Momo/Momito”?

(Oranjestad)—This past weekend, to mark the end of the children’s parade that took place Sunday in San Nicolas, locals gathered once more in the evening hours for Kimamento di Momito (burning of Momito). You may wonder who this Momito character is, why he plays a role during the carnival season, and why it’s tradition to set him on fire. Here is a quick folklore lesson explaining the burning of Momo/Momito on Aruba.

The Momo was first introduced on Aruba in 1954 by Henry Bethencourt (alias Heroudini), three years after its introduction on Curacao. According to Heroudini, the story of the king Momo refers back to the bibli-

cal time of Jonah and the Whale, during a time where sins plagued humans. God made it clear to the people that he would destroy the city unless they repented and stopped sinning. And so before the people began fasting, it was decided that there should be a kind of parade to bring closure to that era. In that parade, a masked king was seen walking along the spectators, a figure representing human sins. At the end of the parade, this masked king was burned, symbolizing the end of a sinful era.

Here in Aruba, this biblical story was also adapted into the folklore of King Momo/Momito during the carnival season. Although not as religiously charged, the burn-

ing of the king does represent an end to the two-month long festivities, and the beginning of a new spiritual cycle on the island. The burning of Momo takes place right after the final Grand Parade on the island, right before Lent.

To say goodbye to the carnival season, locals attend two different burnings of the king; First, the “Momito”, which happened this past Sunday after the children’s parade. Momito represents the end to the children’s carnival festivities (the “-ito” refers to something small, a.k.a, children). Momo is the adult version of the momito, and its burning takes place the same day after the final Grand Parade in Oranjestad.



This week will be the “last hurrah” of the carnival season, with the two Grand Parades left on the itinerary. If you want to say goodbye to this year’s carnival season with the locals, join us

this coming weekend in San Nicolas and Oranjestad to celebrate the biggest parades yet! □

Source: National Archeological Anthropological Memory Management.

Aruba to me



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn’t that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free news-

paper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Elaine and Gregory Smith from Macungie, Pennsylvania, USA.

They wrote to us saying: “Happiness...we’ve had the opportunity to visit our “home away from home” for 34 times over a span of 24 years. It is our happy place. We love the island, the Aruban people, and the friendships we have made along the way. When asked why we visit again and again, our answer is, “Go there and you will understand”. Other islands cannot compare.”

(Picture taken at Atardi restaurant, Marriott Stellaris Hotel, Valentines Day, 2022) Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

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Food culture in Aruba

(Oranjestad) - Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

Breakfast

Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick "to-go" breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie), arepas and

empanadas early in the morning.

Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi di bonchi cora (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time

Dinner time can vary significantly from household to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening "meal"



can typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

(Religious) Holidays

Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and home-

made fruit punch. Desserts include, bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (dark fruit cake), drigidek (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

Snacks and tasty delights

Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, basket, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun.

*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao

*Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)

*Saco: Saco literally means "bag". Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.

Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba



Visit the historic museum at Fort Zoutman!



(Oranjestad)—Located in the middle of downtown Oranjestad, situated right next to the government building “Cocolishi”, is one of the oldest buildings of Aruba: Fort Zoutman. First constructed in 1796, this site has been used (or left unused) in many ways and have survived eras of war and attempted dismantling.

When anyone refers to Fort Zoutman, they are actually

referring to two separate buildings that, over the years, have been merged: the fort and the tower. That's right, the iconic 5-story, squared tower was not part of the original structure of the fort, and is actually called “Willem III Toren”. Constructed in 1867, this tower was named after the then-reigning king of The Netherlands, Willem III. Willem III Toren was originally a light tower, but after a request from Lieutenant

Governor Jan Helenus in 1866, it also became a bell tower.

The fort itself was originally constructed to protect the commerce bay of Paardenbaai from pirates and other disreputable characters roaming the Caribbean Sea. Unlike the Willem III Toren, Fort Zoutman had a more tumultuous past, including the on-and-off reception of unwanted members of the English military several

times (The Netherlands was at constant war with England back in the colonial era).

Over the years, both the fort and the tower had functioned as different government center points, including a tax and stamps office. For some time these two buildings also housed a police precinct and jail, and even experienced abandonment until the Cultural Center Aruba Foundation (CCA) petitioned for its renovation in 1964, turning the site into the Historic Museum it currently is.

Despite its small size, The Historic Museum guards a rich depository of the commercial, military and social history of Oranjestad, offering a glance into how the social culture of the town came to be. If you are interested in history and want to learn more about Aruba, then Fort Zoutman should definitely be included into your itinerary.

The museum is open Monday to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm. □

Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog.



Blackstone Beach

(Oranjestad)—Named after its most recognizable feature, the Blackstone Beach almost represents the opposite of the typical Aruban beaches. For one, it has black sand and is covered in black smooth stones. Secondly, it lies on the northern side of the island, away from the white sandy beaches of in the southern region. So, if you feel up for something different—or if it's opposite day, visit the Blackstone Beach.

Blackstone Beach shows the more natural side of Aruba: the stones that cover the beaches and the shape of it has been crafted for thousand years via volcanic eruptions, coral reef movements and wave activity of the rural northern part of the island.

Located further east to the Natural Bridge and Andicuri Beach, the Blackstone Beach is relatively easy to access. Once you get



passed the Ayo Rock Formation, take the Andicuri road leading up to Andicuri Beach. There, you can park your car and take a 1km hike towards Blackstone Beach.

This beach forms part of the Arikok National Park and is therefore a site that is preserved. This is why it is also relatively untouched by commercial influences. Despite

being called a beach, do note that it is not advised to swim in the water, as the current is very strong and can easily stray you further in the wild ocean. However, you can still enjoy a spectacular view of the stones and the northern ocean that stretches out in front of the beach and take a picture with your friends or family! □



Short history of the beginnings of baseball in Aruba

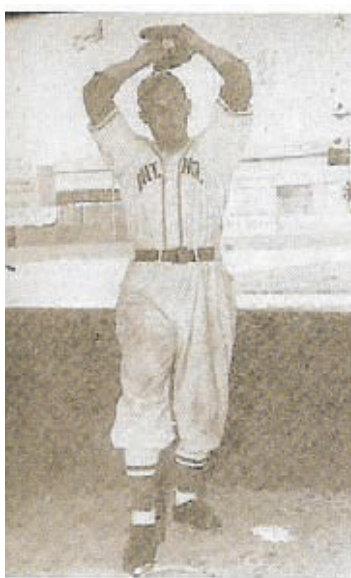
ORANJESTAD — Baseball was played on the island of Aruba in the 1930's, but only by United States expatriates working for LAGO and living inside the LAGO colony. Jim Bluejacket, the legendary US Indian who had played in two major league teams, worked for LAGO during 14 years and was a key factor in the growth of the popularity of the game in the colony. There is no record of Bluejacket ever playing outside the colony.

Outside the colony, the game of baseball was introduced to Aruba by Venezuelan immigrants and sailors on the Venezuelan fishing boats that used Aruba as their home port. They formed pick-up teams and played games on Sundays on an open field behind what is now the Court of Justice. One of the Venezuelans that comes to mind is Felix Garrido, grandfather of our current Prime-Minister.

In the late 30s the leader of this group was Raúl Aparicio, a cousin of Luis Aparicio who is now enshrined in the Hall of Fame in Cooperstown. The Aparicios were evidently very good at sports. Raúl had two brothers who also played baseball, René and Roman. Rosendo, his only brother who did not play baseball became a professional soccer player in the Venezuelan league. Rosendo was nicknamed "Cabeza de oro" (golden head) for a memorable header he scored to win a game for his team.

Interestingly, it was in Aruba that Luis Aparicio played his first game outside of Venezuela. This took place in 1950 when he played shortstop for the school he attended. Later he played for "Cabimas" in a doubleheader of the Venezuelan Western League. These official games of the league were authorized to be played in Aruba by the Professional Baseball Organization of Venezuela. Several others who played in those games have also been enshrined.

Luis Aparicio's father was



the super popular Luis "El Grande" (the great one) after whom the baseball stadium in Maracaibo is named. He and his brother owned the professional baseball teams "Gavilanes" which later became the "Aguilas", and the "Cabimas".

In the early '40s, another group, mostly immigrants from the Dominican Republic also became very active with pickup teams. Some of these remained active in baseball well into the early '50s; as umpires, managers even as players. Among these were Nestor "Pantin" Guerrero who also had a musical band. Perhaps not so coincidentally, many of Pantin's players were also musicians. Luthai Pantophlet who umpired many years was a well-known drummer. Gaston Hazel was a bongo player; José Bryson and the brothers Nicholson, Teddy and Julio, all played several instruments.

In San Nicolas, baseball was played on the grounds next to where the LAGO Sport Park (now Laveist Sport Park) was officially inaugurated in March 1941.

During the WWII years, baseball got a big lift from the influx of Puerto Rican and US soldiers stationed here. As LAGO was playing a very important role in the struggle against Hitler, it was able to get all the sports equipment needed here to allow more people to participate.

In the '40s only the Lago Sports Park organized baseball championship games. The first teams to participate were Artraco, (Aruba Trading Co.), Esso Garage and Botica San Lucas. In 1945 Venezuelan employees of the Lago refinery participated under the name of "Cafenol", a very popular Venezuelan coffee brand. Two other groups of Venezuelan immigrants formed the teams "Cerveceria" (named after the iconic team Cerveceria Caracas), and "Venezuela", although not all members of these teams were Venezuelans. This was also the year that the team



sponsored by Roxy Café started to play as "Dodgers". Dodgers became the dominant baseball powerhouse till the 1950s.

Other teams that entered the baseball scene in the late 1940s: Pepsi Cola (Oranjestad) and St. Thomas Boys (former students of St. Thomas College, Oranjestad). "Baby Ruth" in San Nicolas played initially under the name "Camel" and "Barnes' Ramblers" the only team consisting of Lago Colony players to participate in the Lago Sport Park championships. "Red Rock Cola" was formed in Oranjestad in 1950.

In 1952 the team Pepsi Cola became "Nesbitt's" and had players of seven countries, including two American expats from Lago Colony.

In 1950 a group of prominent members of the Aruba community founded the Amateur Baseball Bond of Aruba (ABBA) to give structure to the management of the sport and became the organizers of official championship games. While maintaining the existing teams in a league that was referred to as A-class, ABBA established a B-class league in which the "Budweiser" and "Braves" played the first years.

By 1952 Aruba became a member of the International Amateur Baseball Association and fielded a team managed by Joe Proterra, (former pitcher of "Barnes' Ramblers"), that would play for the first time ever in the Amateur Baseball World Se-

ries that took place in Havana, Cuba in September. Surprisingly, Aruba won two of its six games and became the darling of the Havana fans. Nell Harms of the Aruban team was named the "Outstanding player of the week" for his performance against Honduras. He allowed just two hits, struck out 15 and hit the only homerun of the game. Joe Cambria, the famous scout for the Washington Senators offered him a contract, but Nel was not interested, but the next year, at the Amateur Baseball World Series in Caracas, Venezuela, Nel and Ruben Phillips did sign and in 1954 they played professional baseball the Georgia-Florida League and the Texas-New Mexico League. They were the first Arubans to play professionally, but not the only ones.

During the games in Havana, contacts were made with the organizers of Little League Baseball in Cuba which eventually resulted in the introduction of Little League in Aruba. Little League of Aruba has been extremely successful: It has produced many players who earned baseball scholarships at universities in the United States, a few who played professionally in the Netherlands and different countries in the Caribbean and five who reached the major leagues: Calvin Maduro, Eugene Kingsale, Radhames Dijkhoff, Sydney Ponson, and Xander Bogaerts one of the brightest stars of Boston Red Sox. □

Written by Mr. Clyde Harms

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 43 Do over

1 Human ancestor

7 Latte topper

11 Gomez of "Only Murders in the Building"

12 Bumpkin

13 Workplace motto

15 Inventor Nikola

16 Olympus leader

18 Vaccine type

21 Easy win

22 Got a C, say

24 Company abbr.

25 Yoga need

26 Sedan or SUV

27 Cheated at hide-and-seek

29 Office leader

30 Glade grazer

31 Smoker's discard

32 Cap feature

34 Sturdily made

40 Cuzco native

41 Flowering shrub

42 South African farmer

DOWN

1 Donkey

2 Stew sphere

3 North Pole worker

4 Get together

5 Pays to play

6 Opposing votes

7 Some brothers

8 Owned by us

9 Crunch targets

10 Ran into

14 Parade sight

16 Like urban areas

17 Game show host

S	O	F	A	S		G	A	S	P	S
A	L	I	E	N		E	X	P	E	L
T	E	R	R	A		N	E	A	T	O
			O	G	R	E		N	E	W
C	L	A	S	S	I	S	M			
H	A	R	M		D	I	E	S	E	L
A	T	E	I	T		S	T	O	V	E
D	E	A	T	H	S		A	M	E	N
			H	E	E	D	L	E	S	S
S	A	P		C	A	R	L			
P	L	A	Z	A		A	I	S	L	E
U	T	T	E	R		I	C	I	E	R
D	O	S	E	S		N	A	D	E	R

Yesterday's answer

19 Fancy neck-wear

20 Minimum amount

21 Tear protector

22 Knee protector

23 Hosp. workers

25 Deserve

28 Vest material

29 Coarse fabric

31 Hooch

33 Sirius or Polaris

34 Shirt protector

35 First numero

36 Cubes in a glass

37 Pub stuff

38 Neptune's domain

39 Skin art, for short

1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10
11							12			
15							14			
			15							
			16		17			18	19	20
21						22				23
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27				28				29		
			30				31			
				32		33				
34	35	36						37	38	39
40							41			
42							43			

2-6

AXYDIBAA XR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-6

CRYPTOQUOTE

Y B B G A W T I X P R B P Z U P A K

D W U P I J D S B K T M K S C M B

P M J K S P J W U K U C Z Z X P Z Z

H B S C M J A W T — U P Z D

U S C D L P M

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: LET YOURSELF BE DRAWN BY THE STRONGER PULL OF THAT WHICH YOU TRULY LOVE — RUMI

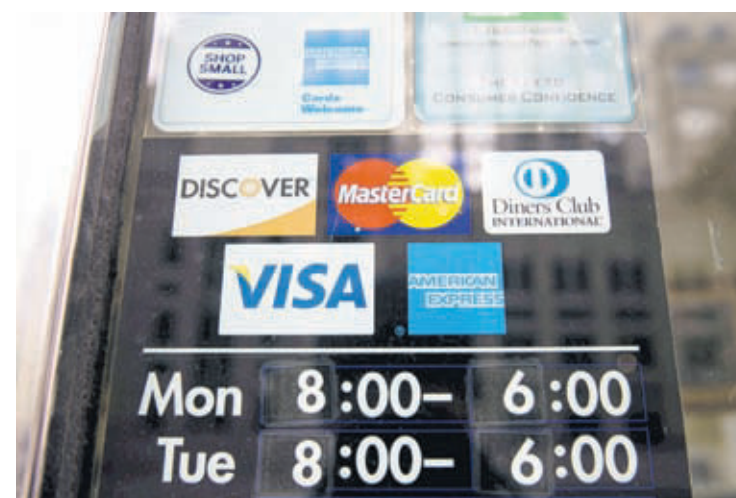
Some Americans have become saddled with credit card debt as rent and everyday prices remain high

By KEN SWEET
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP)— While the U.S. economy is broadly healthy, pockets of Americans have run through their savings and run up their credit card balances after battling inflation for more than two years.

Experts worry that members of these groups mostly lower- and middle-income Americans, who tend to be renters are falling behind on their debts and could face further deterioration of their financial health in the year ahead, particularly those who have recently resumed paying off student loans.

"The U.S. economy is currently performing better than most forecasters expected a year ago, thanks in large part to a resilient consumer," wrote Sherette McCloud, an economist with TD Economics, in a report issued Wednesday. "However, more re-



Credit card options are shown on a store's door on Nov. 29, 2018 in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

cently that spending is increasingly being financed by credit cards."

Americans held more than \$1.05 trillion on their credit cards in the third quarter of 2023, a record, and a figure certain to grow once the fourth-quarter data is released by Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. next month. A recent report

from the credit rating company Moody's showed that credit card delinquency rates and charge-off rates, or the percent of loans that a bank believes will never be repaid, are now well above their 2019 levels and are expected to keep climbing.

These worrisome metrics coincide with the average interest rate on a bank credit card of roughly 21.5%, the highest it's been since the Federal Reserve started tracking the data in 1994.

"Overall, the consumer is credit healthy. However, the reality is that there are starting to be some significant signs of stress," said Silvio Tavares, president and CEO of VantageScore, one of the country's two major credit scoring systems. Most analyses of Americans' financial health tend to tell a tale of two consumers. On one side are the roughly two-thirds of Americans who own their homes and those who've invested in the stock market and done substantially well. □

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Movie Review: Wim Wenders' 'Perfect Days' is sublime

By **JAKE COYLE**

AP Film Writer

Wim Wenders' "Perfect Days" is set among the crowded skyscrapers of Tokyo and the quiet urban parks that Hirayama (Kôji Yakusho) traverses daily in his job cleaning public toilets. But where the movie resides, really, is Yakusho's face.

In this gently sublime film, Hirayama steps outside his humble apartment each morning and gazes up at the sky with a smile radiating gratitude. Hirayama says little throughout the course of Wenders' quiet, quotidian film. Little happens. Yet Yakusho's warm presence speaks volumes in a film where less can mean profoundly more.

Wenders, the 78-year-old German filmmaker, has long had a preference for troubled loners. Think of Harry Dean Stanton's dusty drifter in "Paris, Texas," or Bruno Ganz's terminally ill man in "The American Friend." But the Wenders' movie that "Perfect Days" most recalls is "Wings of Desire," where melancholy angels watched over Cold



This image released by Neon shows Kôji Yakusho in a scene from "Perfect Days."

Associated Press

War-era Berlin and spoke of testifying "day by day for eternity." "Perfect Days" has no such supernatural element, but its gaze is likewise attuned to what's beautiful and meaningful in everyday living.

Each morning, Hirayama wakes, puts on his blue sanitation jump suit and neatly drapes a white towel around his neck. He drives his van from public

toilet to public toilet, where he takes remarkable care in his work. He uses a small mirror to see the underside of a toilet bowl.

"How can you put so much into a job like this?" says Takashi (Tokio Emoto), Hirayama's younger, less scrupulous coworker.

Hirayama's days are rigorously routine but lively with variation. While driving through the elevated high-

ways of Tokyo, he selects a cassette tape from a rack above the sun visor. Patti Smith, Lou Reed, the Kinks, the Animals or Nina Simone play as he rides. Usually, Hirayama, analog through and through, is driving against the traffic.

He's a lover of trees, and each day on his lunch break takes a photograph of the branches above him, with light pouring through.

With the care of a surgeon, he plucks a tiny seedling, places it in a small paper sack, and adds it to his nursery at home. At night, he reads Faulkner.

Eventually, a niece (Arisa Nakano) turns up, followed by Hirayama's estranged sister (Yumi Aso). But Wenders' film, which is nominated for best international film at the Oscars and opens in theaters Wednesday, is largely uncluttered by plot or exposition. Instead, we're invited to ponder Hirayama's serene, monastic existence to admire the joy he finds in the mundane and the attentiveness he gives to the things he values.

Is he running from the world or in its thrall? Wenders, who co-wrote the film with Takuma Takasaki, is a longtime admirer of Japan; in his 1985 documentary "Tokyo-Ga," Wenders traveled to Japan to pay homage to the great filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu.

Much in "Perfect Days," filmed in boxy academy ratio, radiates with a similar spirit of minimalistic wisdom. □

'Almost Surely Dead' is a smart supernatural thriller for a stormy night

By **DONNA EDWARDS**

Associated Press

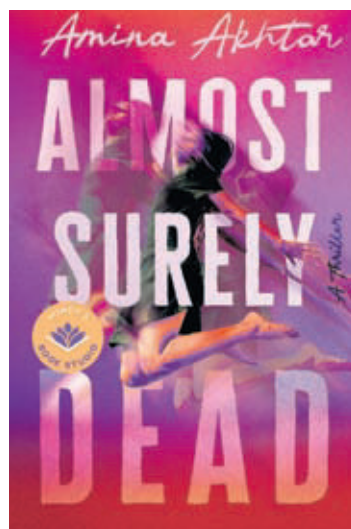
Dunia Ahmed disappeared over a year ago. But before she vanished, weird things were happening, including multiple attempts on her life. So, obviously, two self-proclaimed journalists start a podcast to monetize her tragedy.

In her third novel, "Almost Surely Dead," Amina Akhtar departs from trends and fashion to sink deep into a missing-person mystery with humorous cynicism and an increasingly creepy edge. Two years ago, Dunia, a pharmacist, was in the middle of her regular commute when a fellow subway rider tried to throw her onto the tracks. And this New York nightmare scenario isn't the first she'll face.

Between her stalker ex-fiancé, David, and the unsettling notes showing up at her work and apartment, it seems like an open and shut case. But flashbacks to when Dunia was 5 suggest there may be something more sinister at play.

In these chapters, we see young Dunia's beloved father telling her ghost stories on the sly, teaching her the pieces of her Desi culture that her mother would rather they sweep under the rug: jinns stealing princesses and grotesque churail. Dunia's also a perceptive kid; she hears the whispers and knows her aunt was also deemed "pagal" mentally ill, locked up somewhere back in Pakistan.

On top of the childhood trauma and jinn stories,



This cover image released by Mindy's Book Studio shows "Almost Surely Dead" by Amina Akhtar.

Associated Press

Dunia's been sleepwalking again since her mother's death. Disoriented and exhausted, she can't trust her own eyes and ears.

As the story progresses and the world opens up more, truths that Dunia couldn't see at 5 years old come sifting up to the surface, and suddenly the narrative is a lot more complicated. Who should we direct our anger and fear at?

In a stark commentary on victim-blaming, other characters seem to answer: Dunia. Dunia is victimized over and over by people who seem to see it as their right to treat her poorly or make her relive her near-death experience, from virtual strangers wanting to hear about how she was almost killed to her sister demanding a level of communication not merited by their thin thread of a relationship. Then there's the podcast at first fairly serious,

but the transcripts soon devolve into "No spoilers!" and absurdly tasteless promotional ads. In one of many ruthless portrayals of society and the media, both hosts let David's racism slide without comment when he calls Dunia exotic and talks about how he had a thing for Indian girls in his interview.

And beneath it all, growing until it can't be ignored any longer, the supernatural stays at a steady hum.

"Almost Surely Dead" is the perfect psychological thriller for a dark and stormy night or a rainy day alone on the couch. Strap in, because there's never a good stopping point with Akhtar, a master of pacing and suspense who keeps you guessing until the end. □

Wyndham Clark declared Pebble Beach winner when final round wiped out by weather

By **DOUG FERGUSON**

AP Golf Writer

PEBBLE BEACH, Calif. (AP)

— Wyndham Clark was declared the winner of the AT&T Pebble Beach Pro-Am on Sunday evening when the PGA Tour canceled the final round because of wicked weather conditions that would linger into the next day and cause safety concerns.

Clark's final stroke was a two-putt birdie from 25 feet on Saturday, giving him a course record 12-under 60 and a one-shot lead over Ludvig Aberg, who missed a long eagle putt on the par-5 18th hole.

Clark never had to hit another shot.

"It's maybe not the way you dream of winning," Clark said in a conference call Sunday night. "With that said, a lot of us yesterday had ... not that we knew, but we definitely had this outside shot and thinking that maybe this is our last round."

Clark was six shots behind going into Saturday and said he was aiming for a top 10. Overnight rain saturated Pebble Beach, and raging wind that followed led the



Wyndham Clark gestures after finishing the 18th hole at Pebble Beach Golf Links during the third round of the AT&T Pebble Beach National Pro-Am golf tournament in Pebble Beach, Calif., Saturday, Feb. 3, 2024.
Associated Press

PGA Tour to postpone the final round with hopes of playing on Monday.

The storm, known as an "atmospheric river" that pounded California for the second time, was to linger into Monday morning. While conditions were expected to improve, Monterey County emergency officials had urged resi-

dents to stay at home.

"Out of an abundance of caution for the safety of all constituents, there will be no play on Monday," the PGA Tour said in declaring the tournament 54 holes and Clark the winner.

Clark picked up his third win in the last nine months, all of them big with a \$3.6 million payoff. He also won

the Wells Fargo Championship and his first major at the U.S. Open last year at Los Angeles Country Club. He didn't get to pose with the trophy on the 18th green. He didn't feel cheated out of appreciation, either, not the way the gallery responded to his close call at 59.

"Everyone was celebrating

and congratulating me," Clark said. "I even said to myself, 'This feels like I just won the tournament,' and yet we had another round to play. Today, waking up and they cancel the day, you're trying not to go too far in the future. I get a call that we're going to cancel and you're the winner."

"It's pretty surreal right now."

But it was a dreary start to the PGA Tour's new season of "signature events" on network television. Pebble Beach, among the most famous courses in the world, had its strongest field in decades. CBS was prepared for a telecast with the NFL not playing ahead of the Super Bowl.

And then there was no golf. Nearly an inch of rain overnight saturated Pebble Beach, which had received overnight rain going into Thursday and Friday. The rain cleared on Sunday, pushed by gusts that approached 60 mph and topped portable toilets and fences and ripped tarps away from TV towers. Also felled was a camera used for the ShotLink data collection. □

Former MVP Nneka Ogumike becomes second big free agent to sign with the Seattle Storm

By **TIM BOOTH**

AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP)

— Former WNBA MVP and eight-time All-Star Nneka Ogumike signed with the Seattle Storm on Monday, the second big splash in free agency for the franchise. Ogumike, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2012 draft, was the 2016 league MVP and spent the first 12 seasons of her WNBA career playing for Los Angeles. Ogumike announced last month she would not be returning to the Sparks and ended up signing with one of their Western Conference rivals. "Every part of me is grateful and ready for

this opportunity to continue to be great and sustain legacy," Ogumike said.

Seattle is coming off its worst season by winning percentage since its expansion season of 2000 as the franchise tried to move ahead following the retirement of Sue Bird and the loss of Breanna Stewart in free agency. That left Jewell Loyd as the only star on a roster that was otherwise filled mostly with role players and youth.

Loyd now has two stars as her running mates with the addition of Ogumike and Skylar Diggins-Smith, who signed with Seattle last week. Ogumike, who

will turn 34 in July, averaged 19.1 points and 8.8 rebounds last season for Los Angeles. The past two seasons have been a resurgence for Ogumike averaging 18.6 points, shooting 55% and starting all 70 games she appeared in over the two seasons.

Ogumike helped Los Angeles make the playoffs in her first nine seasons in the league, including a championship in 2016. The Sparks have had six coaches in her 12 years with the franchise, including the current one, Curt Miller.

She was also a leader of the franchise as well as the president of the WNBA



Los Angeles Sparks forward Nneka Ogumike dribbles the ball during the second half of the team's WNBA basketball game against the Dallas Wings in Arlington, Texas, June 14, 2023.

Associated Press

players association.

"The chance to coach Nneka, a veteran in our league with championship

experience, is such an incredible opportunity for our team," Seattle coach Noelle Quinn said. □

Year 25 for Andy Reid might be the best coaching job yet for the 2-time Super Bowl champ

By **ROB MAADDI**

AP Pro Football Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Andy Reid celebrated his 25th season as a head coach with a masterful performance on the sideline and in the locker room. The Kansas City Chiefs are one victory away from becoming the first NFL team in 19 years to win back-to-back Super Bowls. They're here to face the San Francisco 49ers despite a mid-season slump that could've ruined their repeat hopes. Reid kept them steady. This isn't the best team Reid has coached but it just might be his best coaching job.

Sure, he still has Patrick Mahomes. But the two-time NFL and Super Bowl MVP had a subpar season by his lofty standards. He didn't get much help from his wide receivers at times. They led the league in drops. Mahomes once again counted on star tight end Travis Kelce, who had a slight dip in production to go with a massive increase in global attention due to his relationship with Taylor Swift.

Reid made sure Kelce's newfound celebrity status didn't become a distraction.



Kansas City Chiefs head coach Andy Reid watches during the team's NFL football practice Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024 in Kansas City, Mo.

Associated Press

tion.

After starting 6-1, the Chiefs lost five of eight games. At 9-6, they even had a shot to miss the playoffs and ended up with their most losses since 2017.

No chance Reid would let them stumble further. The Chiefs won the next two games to clinch their eighth straight AFC West title and have kept on winning in the playoffs, beating Miami at home in the

wild card round, going on the road to beat Buffalo in the divisional round and No. 1-seeded Baltimore in the AFC championship game.

"Coach Reid just challenging every single person in this building to up the ante just one more step and just keep taking it up a notch every week from here on out," Kelce said. "That's why we love the big guy. You never fall astray from

that kind of mentality no matter how many losses you have, no matter how close the games are and you're just not finishing them. Coach Reid does a great job of re-channeling that mindset every single week and presenting a challenge against the defense or the offense or just the team we're going against in the near future. This week, no better time to challenge everybody in

that building. He's got everyone fired up."

Reid credits Mahomes and Kelce for their leadership, setting the tone for how the team should practice. He also praised general manager Brett Veach for adding players who fit that mentality.

"You're not going to dog it with Pat Mahomes going full speed, Kelce going full speed," Reid said. "They're not going to allow you to do that first of all. Then you watch them, and you watch how they practice, you know it's not a fit if they can't do that. Brett is not going to bring in guys that dog, jog, whatever you want to call it."

The Chiefs lost a Thursday night at Denver to a team that came in 2-5. Two weeks later, they lost a Super Bowl rematch at home to Philadelphia when Marquez Valdes-Scantling dropped what should've been a go-ahead touchdown pass late in the game.

There was another prime-time loss at Green Bay on Dec. 3 followed by a loss at home to the Bills when Kadarius Toney's TD off a lateral from Kelce was wiped out by an offside penalty on Toney. □

NFC outlasts AFC in Pro Bowl Games showcasing soon-to-be Olympic sport of flag football

By **FRED GOODALL**

AP Sports Writer

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — All-Pro wide receiver Tyreek Hill catching a pass over the middle and flashing world-class speed on the way to scoring a touchdown. Receiver Keenan Allen taking a lateral from C.Stroud, juking a defender to buy time before throwing across the field to tight end Evan Engram in the left corner of the end zone. The Pro Bowl Games concluded Sunday with NFC and AFC stars competing in a flag football game that gave fans and a national television audience glimpses of what the soon-to-be

Olympic sport could look like with such highly skilled athletes on the field.

"It was cool. A little flag football. We didn't really play hard when it was pads," Allen said. "It's still football. You are out there running around with the guys who are the best talent in the NFL. It's fun to be out there."

The NFC defeated the AFC 64-59 at Camping World Stadium, with the final score determined by combining points from Sunday's game with those accumulated by each conference over two days of skills challenges.

This was the second year for a reimagined format that

replaced the traditional Pro Bowl tackle football game, which waned in popularity over the past decade.

Players and an announced crowd of 55,709 seemed to enjoy what has become largely a made-for-TV event.

"I think it was amazing," Stroud, who led the Houston Texans to the AFC South title and a playoff victory as a rookie this season. "People showed up and showed out and had a good time."

Stroud had a chance to win it at the end, but his final pass of the game intended for Allen, a six-time Pro Bowl selection with the

Los Angeles Chargers, was broken up in the end zone. "We wanted to win bad,"

Allen said. "We were just trying to make plays at the end." □



NFC players celebrate winning the flag football event at the NFL Pro Bowl football game, Sunday, Feb. 4, 2024, in Orlando.

Associated Press